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ABSTRACT

This official scoring guide for writing presents details of the 6-point scoring system used in Oregon schools for the 1989-99 school year. It list attributes of students' responses to merit a score from 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest) in the areas of ideas/content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and citing sources. (RS)

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Assessment and Evaluation.

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ED 460 376
Writing Official Scoring Guide
1998

S. C. Loh

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Ideas/Content

6

The writing is exceptionally clear, focused, and interesting. It holds the reader's attention throughout. Main ideas stand out and are developed by strong support and rich details suitable to audience and purpose. The writing is characterized by

- clarity, focus, and control
- main idea(s) that stand out
- supporting, relevant, carefully selected details, when appropriate, use of resources provides strong, accurate, credible support
- a thorough, balanced, in-depth explanation / exploration of the topic; the writing makes connections and shares insights
- content and selected details that are well-suited to audience and purpose

5

The writing is clear, focused and interesting. It holds the reader's attention. Main ideas stand out and are developed by supporting details suitable to audience and purpose. The writing is characterized by

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- main idea(s) that stand out
- supporting, relevant, carefully selected details, when appropriate, use of resources provides strong, accurate, credible support
- a thorough, balanced explanation / exploration of the topic; the writing makes connections and shares insights
- content and selected details that are well-suited to audience and purpose

4

The writing is clear and focused. The reader can easily understand the main ideas. Support is present, although it may be limited or rather general. The writing is characterized by

- an easily identifiable purpose
- clear main idea(s)
- supporting details that are relevant, but may be overly general or limited in places; when appropriate, resources are used to provide accurate support
- a topic that is explored / explained, although developmental details may occasionally be out of balance with the main idea(s); some connections and insights may be present
- content and selected details that are relevant, but perhaps not consistently well-chosen for audience and purpose

3

The reader can understand the main ideas, although they may be overly broad or simplistic, and the results may not be effective. Supporting detail is often limited, insubstantial, overly general, or occasionally slightly off-topic. The writing is characterized by

- an easily identifiable purpose and main idea(s)
- predictable or overly-obvious main ideas or plot, conclusions or main points seem to echo observations heard elsewhere
- support that is attempted, but developmental details that are often limited in scope, uneven, somewhat off-topic, predictable, or overly general
- details that may not be well-grounded in credible resources, they may be based on clichés, stereotypes or questionable sources of information
- difficulties when moving from general observations to specifics

2

Main ideas and purpose are somewhat unclear or development is attempted but minimal. The writing is characterized by

- a purpose and main idea(s) that may require extensive inferences by the reader
- minimal development; insufficient details
- irrelevant details that clutter the text
- extensive repetition of detail

1

The writing lacks a central idea or purpose. The writing is characterized by

- ideas that are extremely limited or simply unclear
- attempts at development that are minimal or non-existent; the paper is too short to demonstrate the development of an idea

Organization

6 The organization enhances the central idea(s) and its development. The order and structure are compelling and move the reader through the text easily. The writing is characterized by • effective, perhaps creative, sequencing, the organizational structure fits the topic, and the writing is easy to follow. • a strong, inviting beginning that draws the reader in and a strong, satisfying sense of resolution or closure • smooth, effective transitions among all elements (sentences, paragraphs, ideas) • details that fit where placed	5 The organization enhances the central idea(s) and its development. The order and structure are strong and move the reader through the text. The writing is characterized by • effective sequencing, the organizational structure fits the topic, and the writing is easy to follow. • an inviting beginning that draws the reader in and a satisfying sense of resolution or closure. • smooth, effective transitions among all elements (sentences, paragraphs, ideas) • details that fit where placed	4 Organization is clear and coherent. Order and structure are present, but may seem formulaic. The writing is characterized by • clear sequencing • an organization that may be predictable. • a recognizable, developed beginning that may not be particularly inviting, a developed conclusion that may lack subtlety. • a body that is easy to follow with details that fit where placed. • transitions that may be stilted or formulaic • organization which helps the reader, despite some weaknesses
3 An attempt has been made to organize the writing; however, the overall structure is inconsistent or skeletal. The writing is characterized by • attempts at sequencing, but the order or the relationship among ideas may occasionally be unclear. • a beginning and an ending which, although present, are either undeveloped or too obvious (e.g., "My topic is . . .," "These are all the reasons that . . ."). • transitions that sometimes work. The same few transitional devices (e.g., coordinating conjunctions, numbering, etc.) may be overused • a structure that is skeletal or too rigid • placement of details that may not always be effective • organization which lapses in some places, but helps the reader in others.	2 The writing lacks a clear organizational structure. An occasional organizational device is discernible; however, the writing is either difficult to follow and the reader has to reread substantial portions, or the piece is simply too short to demonstrate organizational skills. The writing is characterized by • some attempts at sequencing, but the order or the relationship among ideas is frequently unclear. • a missing or extremely undeveloped beginning, body, and/or ending. • a lack of transitions, or when present, ineffective or overused • a lack of an effective organizational structure. • details that seem to be randomly placed, leaving the reader frequently confused	1 The writing lacks coherence; organization seems haphazard and disjointed. Even after rereading, the reader remains confused. The writing is characterized by • a lack of effective sequencing • a failure to provide an identifiable beginning, body and/or ending. • a lack of transitions. • pacing that is consistently awkward, the reader feels either mired down in trivia or rushed along too rapidly. • a lack of organization which ultimately obscures or distorts the main point.

Voice

6

The writer has chosen a voice appropriate for the topic, purpose, and audience. The writer seems deeply committed to the topic, and there is an exceptional sense of "writing to be read." The writing is expressive, engaging, or sincere. The writing is characterized by

- an effective level of closeness to or distance from the audience (e.g., a narrative should have a strong personal voice, while an expository piece may require extensive use of outside resources and a more academic voice; nevertheless, both should be engaging, lively, or interesting. Technical writing may require greater distance.)
- an exceptionally strong sense of audience; the writer seems to be aware of the reader and of how to communicate the message most effectively. The reader may discern the writer behind the words and feel a sense of interaction.
- a sense that the topic has come to life; when appropriate, the writing may show originality, liveliness, honesty, conviction, excitement, humor, or suspense.

3

The writer's commitment to the topic seems inconsistent. A sense of the writer may emerge at times; however, the voice is either inappropriately personal or inappropriately impersonal. The writing is characterized by

- a limited sense of audience; the writer's awareness of the reader is unclear.
- an occasional sense of the writer behind the words; however, the voice may shift or disappear a line or two later and the writing become somewhat mechanical.
- a limited ability to shift to a more objective voice when necessary.

5

The writer has chosen a voice appropriate for the topic, purpose, and audience. The writer seems committed to the topic, and there is a sense of "writing to be read." The writing is expressive, engaging, or sincere. The writing is characterized by

- an appropriate level of closeness to or distance from the audience (e.g., a narrative should have a strong personal voice, while an expository piece may require extensive use of outside resources and a more academic voice; nevertheless, both should be engaging, lively, or interesting. Technical writing may require greater distance.)
- a strong sense of audience; the writer seems to be aware of the reader and of how to communicate the message most effectively. The reader may discern the writer behind the words and feel a sense of interaction.
- a sense that the topic has come to life; when appropriate, the writing may show originality, liveliness, honesty, conviction, excitement, humor, or suspense.

2

The writing provides little sense of involvement or commitment. There is no evidence that the writer has chosen a suitable voice. The writing is characterized by

- little engagement of the writer; the writing tends to be largely flat, lifeless, stiff, or mechanical.
- a voice that is likely to be overly informal and personal.
- a lack of audience awareness; there is little sense of "writing to be read."
- little or no hint of the writer behind the words. There is rarely a sense of interaction between reader and writer.

4

A voice is present. The writer demonstrates commitment to the topic, and there may be a sense of "writing to be read." In places, the writing is expressive, engaging, or sincere. The writing is characterized by

- a questionable or inconsistent level of closeness to or distance from the audience.
- a sense of audience; the writer seems to be aware of the reader but has not consistently employed an appropriate voice. The reader may glimpse the writer behind the words and feel a sense of interaction in places.
- liveliness, sincerity, or humor when appropriate; however, at times the writing may be either inappropriately casual or personal, or inappropriately formal and stiff.

1

The writing seems to lack a sense of involvement or commitment. The writing is characterized by

- no engagement of the writer; the writing is flat and lifeless.
- a lack of audience awareness; there is no sense of "writing to be read."
- no hint of the writer behind the words. There is no sense of interaction between writer and reader; the writing does not involve or engage the reader.

Word Choice

6

Words convey the intended message in an exceptionally interesting, precise, and natural way appropriate to audience and purpose. The writer employs a rich, broad range of words which have been carefully chosen and thoughtfully placed for impact. The writing is characterized by

- accurate, strong, specific words; powerful words energize the writing
- fresh, original expression; slang, if used, seems purposeful and is effective
- vocabulary that is striking and varied, but that is natural and not overdone
- ordinary words used in an unusual way
- words that evoke strong images; figurative language may be used

5

Words convey the intended message in an interesting, precise, and natural way appropriate to audience and purpose. The writer employs a broad range of words which have been carefully chosen and thoughtfully placed for impact. The writing is characterized by

- accurate, specific words; word choices energize the writing
- fresh, vivid expression; slang, if used, seems purposeful and is effective
- vocabulary that may be striking and varied, but that is natural and not overdone
- ordinary words used in an unusual way
- words that evoke clear images; figurative language may be used

4

Words effectively convey the intended message. The writer employs a variety of words that are functional and appropriate to audience and purpose. The writing is characterized by

- words that work but do not particularly energize the writing
- expression that is functional, however, slang, if used, does not seem purposeful and is not particularly effective
- attempts at colorful language that may occasionally seem overdone
- occasional overuse of technical language or jargon
- rare experiments with language; however, the writing may have some fine moments and generally avoids clichés

3

Language is quite ordinary, lacking interest, precision and variety, or may be inappropriate to audience and purpose in places. The writer does not employ a variety of words, producing a sort of "generic" paper filled with familiar words and phrases. The writing is characterized by

- words that work, but that rarely capture the reader's interest
- expression that seems mundane and general; slang, if used, does not seem purposeful and is not effective
- attempts at colorful language that seem overdone or forced
- words that are accurate for the most part, although misused words may occasionally appear; technical language or jargon may be overused or inappropriately used
- reliance on clichés and overused expressions

2

Language is monotonous and/or misused, detracting from the meaning and impact. The writing is characterized by

- words that are colorless, flat or imprecise
- monotonous repetition or overwhelming reliance on worn expressions that repeatedly detract from the message
- images that are fuzzy or absent altogether

1

The writing shows an extremely limited vocabulary or is so filled with misuses of words that the meaning is obscured. Only the most general kind of message is communicated because of vague or imprecise language. The writing is characterized by

- general, vague words that fail to communicate
- an extremely limited range of words
- words that simply do not fit the text; they seem imprecise, inadequate, or just plain wrong

Sentence Fluency

6

The writing has an effective flow and rhythm. Sentences show a high degree of craftsmanship, with consistently strong and varied structure that makes expressive oral reading easy and enjoyable. The writing is characterized by

- a natural, fluent sound; it glides along with one sentence flowing effortlessly into the next
- extensive variation in sentence structure, length, and beginnings that add interest to the text
- sentence structure that enhances meaning by drawing attention to key ideas or reinforcing relationships among ideas
- varied sentence patterns that create an effective combination of power and grace
- strong control over sentence structure; fragments, if used at all, work well
- stylistic control; dialogue, if used, sounds natural

5

The writing has an easy flow and rhythm. Sentences are carefully crafted, with strong and varied structure that makes expressive oral reading easy and enjoyable. The writing is characterized by

- a natural, fluent sound; it glides along with one sentence flowing into the next
- variation in sentence structure, length, and beginnings that add interest to the text
- sentence structure that enhances meaning
- control over sentence structure; fragments, if used at all, work well
- stylistic control; dialogue, if used, sounds natural

4

The writing flows; however, connections between phrases or sentences may be less than fluid. Sentence patterns are somewhat varied, contributing to ease in oral reading. The writing is characterized by

- a natural sound; the reader can move easily through the piece, although it may lack a certain rhythm and grace
- some repeated patterns of sentence structure, length, and beginnings that may detract somewhat from overall impact
- strong control over simple sentence structures, but variable control over more complex sentences; fragments, if present, are usually effective
- occasional lapses in stylistic control; dialogue, if used, sounds natural for the most part, but may at times sound stilted or unnatural

3

The writing tends to be mechanical rather than fluid. Occasional awkward constructions may force the reader to slow down or reread. The writing is characterized by

- some passages that invite fluid oral reading; however, others do not
- some variety in sentence structure, length, and beginnings, although the writer falls into repetitive sentence patterns
- good control over simple sentence structures, but little control over more complex sentences; fragments, if present, may not be effective
- sentences which, although functional, lack energy
- lapses in stylistic control; dialogue, if used, may sound stilted or unnatural

2

The writing tends to be either choppy or rambling. Awkward constructions often force the reader to slow down or reread. The writing is characterized by

- significant portions of the text that are difficult to follow or read aloud
- sentence patterns that are monotonous (e.g., subject-verb or subject-verb-object)
- a significant number of awkward, choppy, or rambling constructions

1

The writing is difficult to follow or to read aloud. Sentences tend to be incomplete, rambling, or very awkward. The writing is characterized by

- text that does not invite—and may not even permit—smooth oral reading
- confusing word order that is often jarring and irregular
- sentence structure that frequently obscures meaning
- sentences that are disjointed, confusing, or rambling

Conventions

6

The writing demonstrates exceptionally strong control of standard writing conventions (e.g., punctuation, spelling, capitalization, paragraph breaks, grammar and usage) and uses them effectively to enhance communication. Errors are so few and so minor that the reader can easily skim right over them unless specifically searching for them. The writing is characterized by

- strong control of conventions; manipulation of conventions may occur for stylistic effect.
- strong, effective use of punctuation that guides the reader through the text.
- correct spelling, even of more difficult words.
- paragraph breaks that reinforce the organizational structure.
- correct grammar and usage that contribute to clarity and style.
- skill in using a wide range of conventions in a sufficiently long and complex piece.
- little or no need for editing.

5

The writing demonstrates strong control of standard writing conventions (e.g., punctuation, spelling, capitalization, paragraph breaks, grammar and usage) and uses them effectively to enhance communication. Errors are so few and so minor that they do not impede readability. The writing is characterized by

- strong control of conventions.
- effective use of punctuation that guides the reader through the text.
- correct spelling, even of more difficult words.
- paragraph breaks that reinforce the organizational structure.
- correct capitalization; errors, if any, are minor.
- correct grammar and usage that contribute to clarity and style.
- skill in using a wide range of conventions in a sufficiently long and complex piece.
- little need for editing.

4

The writing demonstrates control of standard writing conventions (e.g., punctuation, spelling, capitalization, paragraph breaks, grammar and usage). Minor errors, while perhaps noticeable, do not impede readability. The writing is characterized by

- control over conventions used, although a wide range is not demonstrated.
- correct end-of-sentence punctuation; internal punctuation may sometimes be incorrect.
- spelling that is usually correct, especially on common words.
- basically sound paragraph breaks that reinforce the organizational structure.
- correct capitalization; errors, if any, are minor.
- occasional lapses in correct grammar and usage; problems are not severe enough to distort meaning or confuse the reader.
- moderate need for editing.

3

The writing demonstrates limited control of standard writing conventions (e.g., punctuation, spelling, capitalization, paragraph breaks, grammar and usage). Errors begin to impede readability. The writing is characterized by

- some control over basic conventions; the text may be too simple to reveal mastery.
- end-of-sentence punctuation that is usually correct; however, internal punctuation contains frequent errors.
- spelling errors that distract the reader; misspelling of common words occurs.
- paragraphs that sometimes run together or begin at ineffective places.
- capitalization errors.
- errors in grammar and usage that do not block meaning but do distract the reader.
- significant need for editing.

2

The writing demonstrates little control of standard writing conventions. Frequent, significant errors impede readability. The writing is characterized by

- little control over basic conventions.
- many end-of-sentence punctuation errors; internal punctuation contains frequent errors.
- spelling errors that frequently distract the reader; misspelling of common words often occurs.
- paragraphs that often run together or begin in ineffective places.
- capitalization that is inconsistent or often incorrect.
- errors in grammar and usage that interfere with readability and meaning.
- substantial need for editing.

1

Numerous errors in usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read. In fact, the severity and frequency of errors are so overwhelming that the reader finds it difficult to focus on the message and must reread for meaning. The writing is characterized by

- very limited skill in using conventions.
- basic punctuation (including end-of-sentence punctuation) that tends to be omitted, haphazard, or incorrect.
- frequent spelling errors that significantly impair readability.
- paragraph breaks that may be highly irregular or so frequent (every sentence) that they bear no relation to the organization of the text.
- capitalization that appears to be random.
- a need for extensive editing.

Citing Sources

Use only on classroom assignments requiring research

6

The writing demonstrates exceptionally strong commitment to the quality and significance of research and the accuracy of the written document. Documentation is used to avoid plagiarism and to enable the reader to judge how believable or important a piece of information is by checking the source. The writer has

- acknowledged borrowed material by introducing the quotation or paraphrase with the name of the authority.
- punctuated all quoted materials; errors, if any, are minor.
- paraphrased material by rewriting it using writer's style and language.
- provided specific in-text documentation for each borrowed item.
- provided a bibliography page listing every source cited in the paper; omitted sources that were consulted but not used.

5

The writing demonstrates a strong commitment to the quality and significance of research and the accuracy of the written document. Documentation is used to avoid plagiarism and to enable the reader to judge how believable or important a piece of information is by checking the source. Errors are so few and so minor that the reader can easily skim right over them unless specifically searching for them. The writer has

- acknowledged borrowed material by introducing the quotation or paraphrase with the name of the authority; key phrases are directly quoted so as to give full credit where credit is due.
- punctuated all quoted materials; errors are minor.
- paraphrased material by rewriting using writer's style and language.
- provided specific in-text documentation for borrowed material.
- provided a bibliography page listing every source cited in the paper; omitted sources that were consulted but not used.

4

The writing demonstrates a commitment to the quality and significance of research and the accuracy of the written document. Documentation is used to avoid plagiarism and to enable the reader to judge how believable or important a piece of information is by checking the source. Minor errors, while perhaps noticeable, do not blatantly violate the rules of documentation. The writer has

- acknowledged borrowed material by sometimes introducing the quotation or paraphrase with the name of the authority.
- punctuated all quoted materials; errors, while noticeable, do not impede understanding.
- paraphrased material by rewriting using writer's style and language.
- provided in-text documentation for most borrowed material.
- provided a bibliography page listing every source cited in the paper; included sources that were consulted but not used.

3

The writing demonstrates a limited commitment to the quality and significance of research and the accuracy of the written document. Documentation is sometimes used to avoid plagiarism and to enable the reader to judge how believable or important a piece of information is by checking the source. Errors begin to violate the rules of documentation. The writer has

- enclosed quoted materials within quotation marks; however, incorrectly used commas, colons, semicolons, question marks or exclamation marks that are part of the quoted material.
- included paraphrased material that is not properly documented.
- paraphrased material by simply rearranging sentence patterns.

2

The writing demonstrates little commitment to the quality and significance of research and the accuracy of the written document. Frequent errors in documentation result in instances of plagiarism and often do not enable the reader to check the source. The writer has

- enclosed quoted materials within quotation marks; however, incorrectly used commas, colons, semicolons, question marks or exclamation marks that are part of the quoted material.
- attempted paraphrasing but included words that should be enclosed by quotation marks or rephrased into the writer's language and style.
- altered the essential ideas of the source.
- included citations that incorrectly identify reference sources.

1

The writing demonstrates disregard for the conventions of research writing. Lack of proper documentation results in plagiarism and does not enable the reader to check the source. The writer has

- borrowed abundantly from an original source, even to the point of retaining the essential wording.
- no citations that credit source material.
- included words or ideas from a source without providing quotation marks.
- no bibliography page listing sources that were used.